

that the Inundation" could not take place if the standard cubit, which was used to measure It, were not deposited according to custom in the temple of the god. The emperor ordered the cubit to be transferred to a church ; and next year, to the general surprise, the river rose just as usual¹ Even at a later time Athanasius himself had to confess with sorrow and indignation that under his own eyes the Egyptians still annually mourned the death of Osiris.² The end came with the destruction of the great Serapeum at Alexandria, the last stronghold of the heathen in Egypt It perished in a furious and bloody sedition, In which Christians and pagans seem to have vied with each other in mutual atrocities.

After its fall the temples were levelled with the ground or converted into churches, and the Images of the old gods went to the melting-pot to be converted into base uses for the rabble of Alexandria:³

The singular tenacity with which the Egyptian people Egypti? maintained their traditional beliefs and customs for thousands ^e™ of years sprang no doubt from the stubborn conservatism an effec of the national character. Yet that conservatism was Itself condSc in great measure an effect of geographical and climatic and hat conditions and of the ways of life which they favoured. Surrounded on every side by deserts or almost harbourless seas, the Egyptians occupied a position of great natural strength which for long ages together protected them from invasion and allowed their native habits to set and harden, undisturbed by the subversive Influence of foreign conquest The wonderful regularity of nature In Egypt also conduced to a corresponding stability In the minds of

the people.
 Year in, year out, the Immutable succession of the
 seasons
 brought with It the same unvarying round of
 agricultural
 toil. What the fathers had done, the
 sons did In the
 same manner at the same season, and so it went
 on from

¹ Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* i. 10 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, xxv. 18 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* Ixvii. 24).
 121). The learned Valesius, in his ³ Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, v. note on this passage, informs us that 16 sq. (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, the cubit was again transferred by the Ixvii. 604 sq.);
 Sozomenus, *Historia* Emperor Julian to the Serapeum, where *Ecclesiastica*, vii. 15
 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, Ixvii. 1152 sq.). These events took place under the
 Emperor
² Athanasius, *Oratio contra Gentes*, Theodosius in the year 391
 A.D.